



Three Keys to Enduring Peace

John 16:25-33

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I had planned to return to the Sermon on the Mount today and take a look at the passage that Mike Swanson just read for us a little while ago on Jesus' teaching on dealing with anxiety. But as I was finishing that message, I decided that cake wasn't ready to take out of the oven. I wanted a little more time to put that together and answer a couple of questions that came to me in my own mind late in the preparation. So I am going to go back to a passage that I taught on here about three years ago before I was even a co-pastor, which means many if not most of you haven't heard me teach on this passage.

I invite you to turn to the gospel of John, in John 16. In the providence of God, this kind of fits with the theme of dealing with anxiety anyway, so that's convenient. But I am happy to return to this rich passage that shows us Jesus' mind shortly before He was about to be crucified.

One of the striking things as we look at John 16, beginning in verse 25, is to see that even with the cross right in front of Him, even with the weight of the sins of the world about to be placed on His shoulder, even knowing that the wrath of God was about to be poured on to Him so that you and I might have our sins forgiven when we believe in Christ, even under the stress of those circumstances that go beyond anything any man has ever known before or since – you see Jesus' loving concern for His disciples and He is making preparation for after His departure.

From the depths of His loving heart, He was thinking about them not His own suffering that was soon to come. And there is so much that is rich in this passage for us, beginning in John 16:25 – let's read it together. Jesus said:

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly

of the Father. In that day, you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

“I came forth from the Father and have come in to the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.” His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.”

Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

As we come to this passage of Jesus speaking to His disciples, He is preparing them for His imminent departure. They had grown used to being with Jesus over the prior three years of His public ministry, walking with Him day in and day out, night after night, being with Him and spending time with Him, hearing the blessed words of a divine mind falling from His lips, seeing Him perform miracles that were the product of the hand of God and proved the authenticity of who He claimed to be – being God in human flesh.

He was their champion; He was their master; He was their teacher. And yet, in a way that they didn't quite fully understand, He was about to leave them. And Jesus is going to prepare them for His departure in this passage before us.

As we come to this passage, Judas has already left. He has already gone off to betray the One who loved him, the One who handed him the bread at the first communion meal – or the last Passover meal, depending on how you want to look at that. And so Jesus is now left with the eleven, the eleven who were true disciples, the ones who truly loved Him.

And He knows them perfectly and He knows that His departure, His imminent crucifixion and His subsequent ascension in to heaven, would send severe shock waves through their system. What were they going to do as they huddled together without Him, ever the great Shepherd of their souls? Jesus now is preparing them for the trials that lay just ahead, even in the coming hour.

And so, as He has been talking with them on this evening, He has been talking to them about troubled hearts and helping them to have the grace that they need to overcome a troubled heart. Look at John 14:1 with me. You see this theme throughout what He says here in this upper room discourse. In John 14:1, He says to them:

Do not let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

In verse 27 of the same chapter, He says:

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

And then one more – in John 16:1, He said:

These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

Jesus was in full command of the situation and is extending this comfort to His disciples. With the cruel cross hanging over His head, Jesus is strengthening His disciples for what was about to come. And as we look at what He said to His disciples at that time, we find principles that apply to us as well, as you and I seek peace and to seek to live in spiritual confidence in the midst of a fallen world – that’s why we are looking at this passage this morning.

Look at verse 25 with me again. Jesus says:

These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

What He is saying here? And why He is saying it at this point in time? Jesus is recognizing that He had been talking to them and speaking to them things that were difficult to understand. He used figurative language; He spoke of heavenly things that their earthly minds just could not get their arms all the way around.

But He tells them and He promises them – He says the time is coming when things will become clearer to you. It is not always going to be that you are wrestling with it; the lights are going to go on and you will understand. He is referring here to the time shortly after His resurrection when the Spirit of God would come and indwell the disciples and give them the ability to understand the words and teaching of Christ in a new way, a fresh way, that apart from the Spirit they didn’t quite always get.

Look at verses 26-27. As Jesus looks forward to that day, He says:

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

Now remember, Jesus is getting ready to leave. Where is that going to leave the disciples? Are they going to be left as orphans? It might seem that way for a short period of time when He is in the tomb and it looks so dark. Jesus here wants the disciples to understand that God the Father Himself loves them. It is not just that Jesus loved them and gave His life during the course of His ministry for them, but the Father Himself loves them, so much in fact that He would freely give to them whatever they ask in Jesus’ name.

He said, “Listen, I am leaving, but that’s not going to mean that you are abandoned. You have the same kind of love flowing from God the Father that you have seen in My life. Be assured that you are not being left as an orphan.”

So Jesus in the course of preparing them for His departure shows them that they could still have confidence in the all embracing love of a caring Father – the same kind of love that belongs to you and me as children of the King, as those who are sons of the Father through faith in Jesus Christ. The Father loves us in the same way that Jesus Himself loves us. And to reinforce that point, Jesus speaks to them in verse 28. We are going through these initial verses rather quickly – verse 28; Jesus says:

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.

What He is saying here is – He says, “Understand, when I talk to you about the Father’s love – and I know you have appreciated My ministry and we loved each other during My time here on earth – understand that I came forth from the Father; the Father was part and parcel of this whole mission. The Father Himself had the design to send Me into the world; I came forth from Him. And so when I commend you to His love and care as I am about to depart, no one is going to miss a beat here; there is not going to be anything lost in the translation. The Father was involved with it from the very beginning, and I am simply going back to Him – it’s going to come full circle. The Father’s plan is what brought me here; the Father’s plan will continue after I’m gone.”

And so that summary that Jesus spoke gave the disciples a flash of understanding; they started to get some understanding that they had lacked before. Look at verse 29:

His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.”

Look at their confidence as they speak: “We know... we believe that You came from God.” They think they really understand it well; they think that their difficulty has been cleared up. And the things that they were saying were good – they had confidence in Christ, they were assured of His divine origin, and based on that, they thought that they were making progress; they thought they were doing well.

But beloved, listen, and this will become personal fairly quickly in your own life: Their confession was fine as far as it went, but they were overconfident. They thought they knew more than they really knew. They thought they had achieved a greater level of spiritual maturity at that point that they had really accomplished.

Look at how Jesus responds to them in verses 31-32, where Jesus answered and said, “Do you now believe?” He throws the question back at them; He says, “Are you sure about this? Do you really think that you have arrived?” You see, their faith was sincere, but

their faith was about to be exposed to a more severe test than they could have possibly imagined.

It would only be a matter of a few moments and they would see the Roman army descend upon Jesus. They would see them take Him captive; they would get scared and run. Just moments later after they had expressed this great confidence about how much they knew and how much they understood, life was going to play out before them and they were going to see that their faith was not as strong as they thought.

And so Jesus corrects them because overconfident disciples are not prepared for difficult trials. Let me say that again. *When you are spiritually overconfident, you are not prepared for difficult trials.* People overestimate their condition all the time – their spiritual strength. The Bible says, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls.”

Whenever I think about that point, my mind always goes back in my own life to November 19, 1988. I was a young Christian, and I was newly married and life was going good and all of that. I think we had just found out that we were pregnant with our first child – when I say “we,” you understand, I mean *Nancy* when I say that). And circumstances were good, and I had been doing some reading and doing some meditating and I was invigorated spiritually, and I remember just like it happened yesterday: I slapped my hand down and said, “I’m ready to be a man of God!”

I thought I was ready to go to that next spiritual level, I had no idea what that meant and even now I don’t know what I was thinking at the time. But I’m saying to myself, and I’m kind of half-praying to God as much as I am congratulating myself, saying, “I’m ready to move on; I’m ready to do and become a better and bigger Christian.” Five days later was when my dad and my brother were killed in that plane crash that I’ve mentioned from time to time – unsaved, not what I was expecting, contrary to all of the prayers that I had prayed for them.

And very quickly, the spiritual confidence that I was boasting in on November 19 dissolved into an extremely long period of time of doubt and discouragement and borderline despair – let’s drop the adjective – *despair* that lasted for years. I had been confident, but I was confident in my own untested faith, and I soon learned how shallow that faith I thought I had really was. It was extremely painful and, looking back on it, extremely humbling to see the way that played out. I said, “I’m ready to be the man.” Five days later, I’m reduced to rubble.

That’s the way it was with the disciples of Christ at this particular point and time: They affirmed their confidence in Christ, their faith was fine as far as it went, but they were not as far along as they thought they were – they were too self-confident. They did not understand the depth of the test that awaited them, and their weakness was going to be exposed during their despair at the time of Christ’s death.

Matthew 26 talks about how when the soldiers took Him, they all fled. Where is your confidence now men? Why are you running if you understand so much? And the

disparity between what they said and what the reality of their spiritual condition – that gap was pretty quickly exposed.

Perhaps as we contemplate this issue of spiritual overconfidence, perhaps there is a word of encouragement in that for one of you here today. You thought that you were a giant for Christ, you thought that you were further along in your spiritual maturity, but subsequent events have given the light to that. Now a trial has come and shaken you to the core and you are groping and looking for something to grab hold of and you find that the depth that you thought you had isn't there to draw on, the well is almost empty. If you are like me when you are in that time, you are torn between the struggles in your heart that would threaten to overwhelm you and trying to maintain a pretense of spiritual stability to those that are around you; I understand that. Listen, here is a word of comfort: Jesus understands that you were never as strong as you thought you were.

He knew that before He saved you; He knew that before the beginning of time. He knew what your weakness was and in His loving grace and mercy He saved you anyway. He patiently carried you along up to this point when you are in the midst of this trial that in the present tense seems to threaten to undo you. Listen, take heart: Jesus knew what His disciples were like when He was speaking these words of comfort to them in the upper room. He knew that there were about to fail Him, and yet He was there, speaking words of peace and comfort and strengthening them for what lay just ahead.

Beloved, here is what I want to say to you – here is what the word of God would say to you in the midst of that discouraging trial, that ongoing, wearing trial: Understand that the discipline of that trial is not designed to crush you in the end. Understand that God is working out purposes, and He has prepared the way for you to come through that trial on the other side long before you ever knew it was going to hit you. His perfect wisdom, His perfect knowledge of what is good for you has been operative through all of that. His hand was involved in every aspect of that trial that has come upon you.

And if you find yourself seemingly unequal to the task, beloved, take heart and do this one thing: simply humble yourself before God under the trial; humble yourself to the point of saying, “Lord, I am not where I thought I was; this trial has brought out the reality of it, and it is not as great as I thought it was.” Beloved, that kind of humble confession before your Lord is very healthy; it is part of what He is trying to do in the midst of that trial because, among other things, God is teaching you to abandon yourself-trust and put your confidence in Christ alone.

Give up the thought that you are something special spiritually. You are nothing apart from Christ. Only through the strength that He supplies are you able to do anything. On your own, in your flesh, you are nothing – you are zero.

And so don't boast in what you think you are. Go back to Christ, go back to your confidence in Him and say, “It is by Your grace alone that I will ever stand.” And orient your thoughts in that direction in the midst of your discouragement as you look for a way out, as you look for where the light to get you out of the tunnel is.

It starts right there; it starts with you – it is not about getting your circumstances changed, it is not about a sudden influx of cash, a new job, or whatever it is that you think you need – what is designed in the midst of that discouragement is for you to come to the end of yourself and cast yourself wholly on the mercy of Christ, even as a believer.

Jesus hints at what His disciples were going to do in verse 32. Let's look at it again, He hints at their coming defection when He says:

Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

This had to have been unthinkable to the disciples: Here they were with Him, they were enjoying that fellowship around the table, and He says, “The hour is here for you to be scattered” – no way!

As you continue to read in the gospels, the disciples' shallow faith was exposed. Jesus was arrested; as Matthew 26:56, which I alluded to earlier, says, “The disciples left Him and fled...” in spiritual defeat.

Here is what I want you to see about this passage, beloved, and as you think through how this applies in your own life. Here in John 16:32 remember that what Jesus is doing: the tenor of this, the tone of this, is encouragement. The tone of this is to give them strength. The tone of what He is doing is to keep their hearts from being troubled even in light of their eminent defection.

And so in verse 33 – and this is where we are going to camp for the rest of our time together – in verse 33 He says this to them – look at verse 33 with me – He says, “These things I have spoken to you...” What things? “These things that what we have just been going through in this past several minutes together,” that He has talked about, and particularly the fact that they were about to be scattered. He says in verse 33 – this almost seems counterintuitive:

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.

He is not coming down hard on them; He is not cracking the whip on them. He is intending to give them peace through what He says here.

In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

Peace – one source defines it as “a state of being that lacks nothing and has no fear of being troubled in its tranquility.” If I could – and it is a good thing that I can't – it would be interesting to see our hearts put up on display and to see how much the fear of the future is influencing each one of us here, to see where the fear of loss or the fear of the lost relationship or the fear of health or finances or whatever – to see how much the fear

of those things and the fear of changes dominates the affections of our hearts – that would be a pretty interesting thing to see.

What I want you to see, beloved, is that the Christian faith is intended to be so preeminent in your affections – let me put it this way – *Christ* is to be so preeminent in your affections that your heart is settled in peace about what the future holds. Anxiety about the future is contrary to Christian faith. Here Jesus is laying before us the source of peace, giving forth principles that would cultivate peace in a troubled world – things that apply right now, today to what you are contemplating in your life. I want to lay this out in three principles from verse 33.

The first principle is this – how is it that we cultivate peace in this troubled world? How is it that you can look devastating trials square in the face and rise above them regardless of whether it changes or not? That’s the point that I love to come back to again and again and again, because if the Christian faith is true, and it is, then it means that your circumstances do not have to change for you to know this inner tranquility that Jesus is commanding to His disciples.

We always get that backwards. We are trying to change things, trying to change externals, and I want you to see – because it is so liberating – is to recognize that you are not a victim, you are not a prisoner of your circumstances. Your spiritual life is not bound to what is going on around you.

The inner reality of Christ and the truth that He lays out here gives you the ability to rise above them and to know that inner state of tranquility if things never get better. I say that in the authority of the word of God, not because I diminish the things that you are going through. Here is a good starting point for you if you are confused in the midst of your trials:

1. Recognize the Obstacles

Look at verse 33 with me again. Jesus says:

These things I have spoken to you – for this purpose – so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation...

“In the world you have tribulation...” Job said that “man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward” – it is just a natural course of events in the fallen world. Jesus says, “In this world you have tribulation.” This word for tribulation includes the idea of pressure. It is a multi-faceted word: it can refer to outward circumstances that are difficult; it can also be used to refer to the internal affections of the human heart. Jesus says in this world you have tribulation.

In this immediate context, He is referring to that coming immediate trial that will cause His disciples to scatter. The army is going to come, it is going to arrest Him; they are going to be under pressure, and they are going to flee from that pressure to try to get

away from it. They are going to run like some of us try to do some times in our difficulties.

But here in this context, and knowing that Jesus was planning these words to be recorded for our use and edification as well, it's certainly within the scope of this word to understand troubles in a broader sense to include all of the various problems that come to you and me from living in a fallen world – every aspect of it. Jesus is telling you right now that you are going to have trouble in this world. You say, “Well, that’s not very helpful. How is that suppose to help me have peace? You are telling me troubles coming; I don’t want trouble.”

How does that help? I see it this way. To be forewarned about tribulation is to be forearmed. If you have false expectations about the Christian life that somehow this is going to be your deliverance from trouble, that life is going to be smooth and it is going to be a sailboat on a smooth lake, then sooner or later your expectations are bound to be broken. If you come to the Christian life with that kind of expectation – that this is a life of tranquility externally, then sooner or later, death or sickness or reversal is going to come and you are going to find yourself stranded with no place to go.

Beloved, Jesus loves you enough to tell you what the reality of the situation is, so that you can know the lay of the land and know where you are going. Tribulation does not have to disturb your tranquility because if you understand in advance that you will have your share of troubles of different kinds, you don’t have to be perplexed. You don’t have to be knocked off course and wonder, “What is going on here? Where did God go in the midst of these trials? Is He angry with me? Have I done something wrong? Why has the hand of God turned against me as evidenced by these external trials I am going through?”

That whole line of broken, distorted, wrong thinking is precluded when you understand the simple word that Jesus speaks, “In the world you have tribulation...” They are going to come. Of course you have difficulties, beloved, it is part of living the Christian life. I don’t say that to diminish your struggles. I don’t say that in a condescending or condemning way. Just understand the reality of it: When Adam and Eve fell, it introduced the whole world of problems in to God’s creation. And you not only are experiencing some of the results of that, you are contributing to the problem with your own sin and fallen short of God. So of course you have difficulties.

If Jesus suffered in this world, and He did, and He was sinless, and He was, then beloved, it follows that you as His disciple are going to have troubles too; we just have to get our expectations straightened out. Really the question is what will the form of your troubles ultimately be, not whether they will come.

It is helpful to me, if you think about a commercial airplane in this context. Commercial airplanes have instruments that give the pilot reference points to stay on course even when he can’t see where he is going. If it is dark and stormy, the instruments tell him where the plane is at and what the direction is. And if he did not have that instrument, if he had to rely on his own judgment, he would surely stray in to danger. Beloved, one of

your spiritual instruments in life that you need to lay hold of when trials come is to step back and recognize that obstacles are an inherent part of living the Christian life.

Take heart in that because Jesus knew you would have trials and He warns you in advance. The airplane of your life is not off-course simply because you have trials; you are just having tribulations and Jesus said that you would. You look at these words, you look at your life and say, “This is what Jesus said; I’m not lost here.” You have to start and recognize that trials and tribulations are going to be part of the Christian life and that God’s hand is in the middle of all of it, working out His purposes, working them out for your good.

But beloved, it is not enough, I would say, to simply recognize that obstacles are going to come. It would be pretty easy, either in the midst of the trials or simply hearing that declared, to say, “That’s really a bummer! I don’t want trials; I don’t like the trials that I’m in.” And you just say, “I give up.” And you give in to the discouragement that trials tempt you to. You know what I’m talking about, don’t you? And you say, “I don’t want to fight any more; I don’t want to go on. This is just too heavy on my heart and I’ve had enough.”

You could recognize the obstacles and come out there, but that’s not where we come out, because you need to go further, and Jesus here shows the disciples how you go further in the midst of the tribulation. Second point, just to kind of outline this for you – you not only recognize the obstacles, you...

2. Rise to the Occasion

You rise to the occasion. Look at the middle of verse 33 with me again – Jesus said: “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage...” Take courage – this is a command that calls the disciples and calls you today. I love the challenge of this, I love the challenge of the word of God in the midst of trials – this word expresses a call to you to manifest spiritual strength in the face of your intimidating circumstances.

Life is hard and you are tasting that and you feel it out, and in the midst of that, Jesus comes to you and says, “Take courage. Play the part of the man. Rise to the occasion. Don’t wilt in the face of enemy fire. Stand up and be confident. Stand up and display the spiritual strength that is worthy of the Lord who died for your sins.” That’s the idea.

I want to take you to a few places where Jesus uses this word so you can kind of get the sense for it and the different circumstances in which it is used. I will just show you three from the book of Matthew – turn back to Matthew chapter 9. I want you to see the flavor of this word for “to take courage” – taking courage, meaning to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of testing. Look at Matthew 9:2, for example, how Jesus uses this word:

They brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.”

In the midst of his being flat on that bed as they brought him to Jesus, Jesus says, “Take courage.” He calls forth this response of faith from the man, telling him that his sins were forgiven – stand up and rise like a man. He speaks to his heart before He speaks to his body in that instance.

In verse 20, where we see a fearful, trembling woman at the feet of Jesus, Matthew 9:20:

A woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.”

In the midst of her fear and trembling, of reaching out and touching the garment of the Son of God, Jesus turns to her and says, “Take courage; stand firm; your faith has made you well.”

One more, Matthew 14:25 – the disciples are on a boat in a sea – in verse 24 it says:

The boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary.

You have to love how understated this next verse is, verse 25:

In the fourth watch in the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea.

It is like He is walking down Hollywood Boulevard – hey, He is walking on the sea. No one walks on the sea! But Jesus does. Verse 26:

When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear.

Verse 27:

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

In the midst of life-threatening circumstances, shaking in their figurative boots, Jesus says to them, “Take courage; be confident because it is Me; be firm of purpose because it is Me.”

And beloved, it is the same thing today: You have to look at the unseen spiritual realities that are working in your life, the hand of God in the providence of everything that comes to you, the fact that He intends to bless you in them and bring good out of everything that comes because He “works all things together for good to those who love Him and are

called according to His purpose,” because you know that He intends to bring you in to His heavenly home where you will see Christ face to face.

And you take all of those unseen realities that we only know because God has graciously revealed them to us in the scriptures, and you bring those unseen realities to bear on your trials and you say, “I am going to take heart, I am going to take courage; I’m going to stand firm in the midst of my trials, having confidence in God no matter what comes, and I will love Him and I will praise Him. I will worship Him before I see how this resolves itself. I will not withhold my affection, I will not withhold my obedience, I will not withhold my love and testimony to Christ until God changes this. I will give Him myself unreservedly, completely even if it never changes.” That’s the idea of taking courage, firmness of purpose, unqualified allegiance to the God of your salvation – come what may, rise to the occasion.

And when we talk about rising to the occasion, beloved, I want to be real specific here. When you think of rising to the occasion, sometimes the temptation might be to simply think of dramatic lifetime encounters where the faith is really on the line. You think about Martin Luther before the Catholic Church when they were threatening to kill him because of his stand for truth. Yes, he rose to the occasion at that point of his life, but beloved, if you only think about it in those kinds of lofty, extraordinary terms that historians still write about 500 years later, I am afraid that would make the whole process of rising to the occasion and overcoming the world far too distant and make it seem like there is not a daily application or a daily encouragement for your own heart here.

Listen, in the mind of God, in the omniscient understanding of God as the One who looks not as man sees on the outer appearance, but one who looks on the heart, you rise to the occasion when you trust God and refuse to fear in the future. You rise to the occasion when you find contentment even in times of need.

The tribulations are diverse, but beloved, understand that you serve a God who sees every move that you make, and your spiritual success is not diminished simply because it occurs in the mundane details of life. In some ways the challenge is even greater there, the occasion is even more to rise up to than those, because no one is watching – it is just you, living it out because you realize and recognize the presence of God in your life and say, “God, for Your sake alone, this is my heart.”

And so, beloved, as you contemplate about how to cultivate peace in the midst of the fallen world, you have to look beyond the circumstances that lay on you and speak to your heart and preach to yourself in a way that says, “You know what? My heavenly Father loves me; He knows what I need before I ask. He is in control and therefore, I will not allow my heart to yield to fear, anxiety, or discouragement no matter how bad this trial gets.” That’s rising to the occasion. That is a life that glorifies God; that is supernatural.

As I have said in the past, beloved, you don’t have to be a Christian to rejoice and be content when circumstances are good; the challenge for each one of us is when the

circumstances go absolutely opposite of what we want, then what kind of Christian are you then?

What I want for you in GraceLife is to say, “I’m there,” or “When that comes, I’m going to be the same kind of joyful, obedient Christian in the midst of that trial as I am when things are the way I want them.” That’s the standard that Christ calls us to, that the Bible calls us to, that is the standard that is worthy of the one who died for your sins. Ultimately, you rise to the occasion when you:

3. Rest in the Overcomer

Look at verse 33 again – Jesus says:

In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

Jesus ties your ability to take courage in the midst of your tribulations to the fact that He Himself has overcome the world. Now think with me for a moment. People outside the circle of the disciples would look at the cross of Christ and see nothing but total defeat.

The cross was an instrument of shame; it was an instrument of judgment; it was an instrument of total humiliation. And here is Jesus about to go to the cross and Jesus sees it as His complete victory over all that the world can do to Him. He goes to the cross not in gloom but as a conqueror. He goes to capital punishment at the hands of pagans whom He created and He says, “I go in triumph; I have overcome the world.”

How could He say that? How could anyone in their right mind say that they had overcome the world when they were on the verge of crucifixion? How could Jesus say that He had overcome the world when He had no wealth, no status? One of His own disciples betrayed Him to the authorities. His closest friends would soon abandon Him and leave Him alone. And yet here is this Son of God in full possession of His faculties saying, “I have overcome the world.”

At one level, we can look at that and say Jesus doesn’t look like a world leader. He certainly would not meet any worldly definition of success at this point in His life – ragtag bunch of 11 people around Him and even they are going about to leave Him – what is this?

But maybe, beloved, maybe we have our definitions all wrong. Maybe we don’t understand the way Jesus did what it means to overcome the world. Maybe we define it too much in the external trappings of success, because when you think about the life of Jesus from a biblical, spiritual sense, we see it differently. Because even though the fury of hell had been unleashed against Him, Jesus did not flinch from obedience to His Father. He always spoke the truth even though it cost Him His life. He did not return evil for evil, but He gave a blessing instead. He loved those who were His own with perfect faithfulness unto the end.

You look at the life of Jesus and you say where is the selfishness of His spirit? Where was His sinful anger? When did He not manifest perfect self-control even in the face of provocation? Where was Jesus ever afraid of man? When did He protect His own interest? When did He run from danger? Where was His fear of death? And ultimately, as He bore the sins of those who would ever believe in Him on the cross, He defeated death itself.

Did He overcome the world? Absolutely, the way that no one before or no one since ever has. He stands alone in an unparalleled glory. In spite of all the provocations of men and temptations from the devil, Jesus never failed once. The world tried to beat Him and could not do it. His tranquility was intact; His obedience to the Father was perfect. Jesus was an impeccable spiritual success.

And in the midst of that perfect life, Jesus comes to His disciples and says, “You can take courage because I have overcome the world.” He ties your ability to overcome to the fact that He has already done it. He says, “You belong to Me; My victory I share with you.” The same power which dwelt in Christ now dwells in you. Listen to Romans 8:11:

If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

You share in the spiritual resources by the indwelling Holy Spirit that led Jesus to utter perfection. You can rest in that; you can overcome trials through that, but what is more, you can rest even more knowing that Christ plans to share His victory with you forever. John 14:2 – Jesus said:

In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you, for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

In the dwelling places of heaven, in that place where Jesus has prepared, your final overcoming of the world will be made complete. You will be where He is, in the place that He has prepared for you, and you will be there with Him for ever. You have Christ's power now as a believer in Christ; you will share His heavenly glory in the future. Beloved, when we talk about enduring peace in the midst of a fallen world, let that bring unconquerable peace to your soul.

If you are here today and you have not put your faith in Christ, you need more than internal peace. You need the objective peace that comes from being reconciled to God through faith in Christ. Your sins separate you from Him. There is no peace because you are at enmity with God. To you, my friend, I would say that in His love for the world, God has provided the means for you to know that peace. Jesus died for sinners so that you can be forgiven and have true objective peace with God that spills over in to the kind of subjective peace that we have been talking about. John 1:12 says:

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

My friend, believe in Christ and be saved from your sins; receive Him and find peace with God. Let's pray:

Our Father, we thank You for these wonderful words from our Savior. We thank You that You have given the means by which we can overcome tribulation, and we ask for Your grace that we might take courage and manifest firmness of purpose in the midst of them. And we rejoice that we share with Christ in His victory because He has overcome the world. We love You, we honor You, and we lay before You the purpose and intents of our life so that we would live this out in a way, Father, that is worthy of the One who loved us and gave Himself up for us.

Take us and use us now, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This transcript was prepared by Shari Main.